

From: [Marissa Kokkoros](#)
To: [councilmeeting](#)
Subject: [External Sender] My comments for 2023.CC8.2 on July 19, 2023 City Council
Date: July 17, 2023 6:20:33 PM
Attachments: [Toronto IPV epidemic 2023-Aura Freedom & Women's Habitat.pdf](#)

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the July 19, 2023 City Council meeting on item 2023.CC8.2, Declaring Gender-Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence an Epidemic in the City of Toronto

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

On July 14th, City Council released the agenda for the upcoming committee meeting with Mayor Chow, where she plans to present item **CC8.2**, urging the **Council to declare a Gender-Based and Intimate Partner Violence epidemic**.

This news comes after the **Urgent Call to Action and brief (see attached)**, released on July 6th through a collaborative effort by **Aura Freedom International** and **Women's Habitat of Etobicoke** to have Toronto recognize Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) as an epidemic. This Urgent Call to Action was endorsed by more than 30 organizations, and counting (**see list of endorsements attached**). Both Aura Freedom and Women's Habitat have a long history of advocating for and supporting survivors of Violence against Women (VAW), intimate partner violence (IPV), and human trafficking, and continue to be committed to engaging community organizations, grassroots groups, advocates, and survivors, in the efforts to address IPV and GBV in this city.

Aura Freedom International's vision is a world in which all women and girls live free from violence. Created in the name of gender equality, Aura Freedom is a grassroots, intersectional feminist organization that works to eradicate violence against women and human trafficking, working with a diverse group of allies to achieve our goals. Through education, advocacy, research, training, and feminist movement building, Aura Freedom has implemented sustainable projects addressing violence against women and human trafficking in Toronto and more broadly in Canada. Our work has advanced gender equality, empowered marginalized women and given survivors anti-oppressive access to crucial services.

Women's Habitat of Etobicoke (WHE) is a feminist, multi-service, community-based organization in South Etobicoke, serving diverse women and their dependents experiencing violence and poverty since 1978. In 2006, WHE opened an outreach centre to respond to the increasing needs for services for victims and survivors of domestic violence. WHE offers transformational services and programs in two distinct locations to address the impact of

violence and poverty which includes, safety audits, safety planning, trauma-informed crisis and ongoing counselling services, housing support services, advocacy and referrals to settlement and community resources, as well as skills and capacity building for promoting healthy relationships and prevention of gender-based violence. WHE has been working alongside other organizations in the anti-violence sector to identify local and systemic challenges and solutions to tackle the issue of violence against women.

"We're thrilled that our Urgent Call to Action is being answered sooner than we could have ever anticipated. Right now, I am thinking about what this declaration will mean to survivors and children who are fleeing violence, and to those still living in violent homes, walking on eggshells every day of their lives, trying to stay safe. They will feel seen, they will feel valued, and they will feel that their lives and experiences matter. This is the power of grassroots, feminist activism and the good it brings to everyone, not just women and girls. Because we know that women carry their families and communities on their backs, and when they are empowered and respected, everyone thrives. We are grateful that Mayor Chow is taking this stance and has recognized the sense of urgency required. Women and their children cannot wait any longer. We look forward to being a part of this collective effort moving forward." -

Marissa Kokkoros, Executive Director, Aura Freedom

"We are extremely encouraged by Mayor Chow's recommendations to the City Council as it brings us closer to taking meaningful action to address and eradicate GBV and IPV in this City. This intent and declaration sends a very important message to victims and survivors of IPV, which is that this City recognizes their plight and more importantly, that violence against women is a public issue, that we all have responsibility to work collectively to seek solutions that will create safety for women and children and gender diverse individuals. Women's Habitat of Etobicoke is fully committed to working with the City of Toronto in advancing this agenda and all efforts to support survivors of GBV and IPV " - **Carla Neto, Executive Director, Women's Habitat of Etobicoke**

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Freedom from violence for all women and girls,

Marissa Kokkoros (she/her)

Founder and Executive Director - Aura Freedom International

www.aurafreedom.org

Facebook: Aura Freedom International

Twitter & Instagram: @aurafreedom



Aura Freedom would like to acknowledge that we are situated upon the unceded, traditional territories of the Huron-Wendat, Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Today, the meeting place of "Tkaronto" (Toronto) is still the home to many Indigenous Peoples from across Turtle Island. We are thankful for the opportunity to work towards the eradication of violence against women and girls on this land.